

(Remarks made by the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Commencement Luncheon, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, Saturday, June 15, 1963)

President Miller asked me to make some brief remarks in a light vein. I suppose one might be forgiven for making light of that which occupies most of our time, being university presidents.

While I happen to be a Catholic priest, and President Miller a medical Doctor, we are somewhat professionally offbeat as the rank and file of university presidents go. How does one get the job? Well, in my case, they asked me if I wanted it. I said, "No", so they told me to do it anyway. You see, being in a religious order is like being in the Army. You request Europe, and you get Japan.

The most rational way of selecting a person for a position nowadays is to analyze the requirements of the job and then try to find someone with matching capabilities. In the case of the modern university presidency, one would do better to find twins or triplets with different individualized capabilities and then try to make the public believe they were one person. You'll understand what I mean once I analyze the job for you.

First of all, the university is a community of scholars, so the President should obviously be a scholar. There are two immediate problems though, even though he is one: How shall he ever find time to remain a

scholar in his subject, and then, who among scholars knows in any depth the wide range of subjects from astronomy to zoology that the modern university teaches. Willy-nilly, once elected, he will be expected to converse with the best scholars in all of these subjects, to be interested in each and all, and to promote what is best for them, to keep the sciences and the humanities in balance, to promote meaningful research without allowing teaching to be neglected.

He will soon find out that his best faculty members are being continually wooed by the multitudinous agencies of government, local, state, and national, by corporations, foundations, and mostly by other universities who are trying to replenish the professors who have been wooed from them by the same wooers. If the president thought his courtship days were over, he soon finds himself rapidly reviewing the old tricks. There is no great university without a great faculty, and distinguished faculty people get more attention nowadays than a single nurse on Guadalcanal during the war.

Then there are students. Good ones are pursued like all-state quarterbacks, and for all the gentility of academe, this pursuit is nothing less than cutthroat. Woe to the president whose scholarship program is lagging, or whose field work is faulty. Let me add that bright students,

well-educated, develop their facile minds and critical powers early. These need immediate exercise, so they immediately commence to take the institution apart and provide all kinds of ideas about how it should be rebuilt. This makes for excitement and the institution will survive the local problems, but it takes time to explain to the mayor why the student editors call him a bum.

There are also minor distractions that also take time, like party raids, riots, and occasional clashes between town and gown. One thing the president learns early - the Dean of Students may occasionally lower the boom, but he must ultimately make it stick, to the student, his parents, his alumni friends, and any benefactors he may know. One can survive the disagreeable aspects of this, but then again, it does take time.

Thus far, the president is only mildly befuddled by the fact that he cannot disassociate himself from the multitudinous tasks of all the academic deans and the Dean of Students. However, these tasks seem proper to a university, so he takes a handful of aspirins and bends his neck to the yoke. Then he learns that the football team is either too bad or too good, not to mention twenty other teams ranging from golf to wrestling. His greatest athletic feat may be getting out of bed in the morning, but

suddenly here is another problem that cannot be side-stepped, and it does take time.

Universities also need buildings, and buildings need land, and equipment - little items like a two and a quarter million dollar computer or a three million dollar tandem Van de Graaff accelerator. Libraries are always too small so you plan one six times bigger and then try to fill it with X million more books at ten dollars a book.

All of which brings us to one thing the president learns very early - that nothing on earth is more expensive than good education, and if a president cannot come up with a program for getting more money, he is really kaput. Now comes the crude awakening. All the dreams are empty without the means of achieving them. The problems at home could well take all one's time and talent, but you don't get money by staying home. You may resist for a while, but you soon learn that even the President of Harvard spent every Monday for three years in New York with his fund-raisers, not counting special trips to Seattle, San Francisco, Dallas, and Atlanta. The President of Princeton spent only one-third of his time in fund-raising. What do you do? You start living on airlines and in hotels, and you beg!

About this time, the various agencies of government catch up with you, too. The White House has a problem in Pakistan, the Atomic Energy Agency needs you in Vienna, the Civil Rights Commission has problems all over the country, and the State Department resents your spending so much time solving the National Science Foundation's problems in Antarctica when they have more pressing problems in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. If you happen to know a few foreign languages, God help you! But all this takes time, too.

Then someone decides that you are not spending enough time on the multitudinous boards and commissions of the various national educational associations. You may hold off for a while, but, believe me, they will shame you into service before long.

By now, the president's name is before the great American public, and you are simply shirking your duty if you do not appear on this television panel, this conference, this important symposium. You will also be invited to join this foundation board - don't miss it - and that new important civic commission. You should also give about ten speeches a week - on subjects ranging from free enterprise to genetics or demography - be working on a

book, and reading several hundred pages of reports each week so you don't appear to be a dodo when you function at meetings several times each day.

Somewhere along the line, you realize that alumni are important, too. This is not a major problem, since the majority reside in only thirty-five cities across the land. They will be satisfied if you see most of them every three or four years, and answer their mail promptly. Don't worry. There are only thirty or forty thousand of them. It only means time.

I haven't mentioned that universities also have Boards of Trustees, Advisory Councils, Visiting Committees, two hundred student clubs, multitudinous benefactors, parents of students, distinguished guests, and so forth. What do these need? Only attention and time.

When all is said and done, the university president really does not spend enough time with all of these constituencies - why, because there are only twenty-four hours in every day and only seven days in every week. Maybe genetics will get better organized to produce more identical twins and triplets, but until then, we just feel like the two cows that saw milk trucks passing with signs on their sides: Pasturized, vitaminized, and homogenized. The one cow said to the other, "Don't you feel inadequate?"

We surely do. Many thanks.